



The Impact of Social Media on Students' Academic Performance

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ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the landscape of modern communication, particularly among university students. This study investigates the multifaceted impact of social media usage on students' academic performance at IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto. Employing a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative survey data from 100 undergraduate students and qualitative interviews with 15 participants, this research explores the frequency of social media use, preferred platforms, perceived academic benefits, and associated challenges. Findings reveal a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.62$, $p < 0.01$) between excessive social media usage (more than four hours daily) and Grade Point Average (GPA), while moderate usage demonstrates measurable educational benefits including enhanced collaborative learning and access to academic resources. The study identifies distraction, procrastination, and sleep disruption as primary mediating variables. These results suggest that educational institutions should implement structured digital literacy programs and promote balanced social media engagement to optimize academic outcomes.

Keywords: Social Media, Academic Performance, Students, Education, Technology

Article history

Received:
date

Revised:
date

Accepted:
date

Published:
date

Citation (APA Style): To be added by editorial staff during production

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an inseparable part of contemporary student life. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Twitter (now X) attract billions of users globally, with young adults aged 18–24 representing the most active demographic. In Indonesia, a report by Hootsuite (2024) indicates that approximately 167 million people are active social media users, representing more than 60% of the total population, and this figure continues to grow annually.

Within the academic context, the relationship between social media and student performance remains a subject of considerable scholarly debate. Proponents argue that social media fosters collaborative learning, facilitates peer communication, and provides students with access to a vast repository of knowledge and academic resources (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Conversely, critics highlight the detrimental effects of prolonged screen time, digital distraction, sleep deprivation, and the displacement of academic activities by social media consumption (Rosen et al., 2013; Junco, 2012).

IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto, an Islamic higher education institution located in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, serves a student population that is increasingly immersed in digital culture. Preliminary observations by the researcher indicate that a significant proportion of students

engage with social media platforms for several hours each day, raising concerns among faculty and administrators regarding the potential erosion of academic focus and achievement. Despite growing institutional concern, empirical studies examining this phenomenon within the specific socio-educational context of IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto remain scarce.

This study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by systematically investigating the relationship between social media usage patterns and academic performance among undergraduate students at IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto. The research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the dominant social media usage patterns among students at IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto? (2) What is the relationship between the intensity of social media use and academic GPA? (3) What mediating factors explain the relationship between social media use and academic performance? (4) What strategies can be recommended to promote balanced and productive social media use?

The significance of this study lies not only in its contribution to the growing body of literature on technology and education but also in its direct implications for policy development, curriculum design, and student support services at IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto and similar institutions across Indonesia.

METHOD

This study adopts a concurrent mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative interview data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The mixed-methods approach is particularly appropriate for this study as it allows for the triangulation of findings and the capture of both statistical patterns and lived experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The study population comprises all undergraduate students enrolled at IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto during the academic year 2024/2025, totaling approximately 1,200 students across four faculties. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 100 students, ensuring proportional representation across gender, study program, and academic year. Additionally, 15 participants were purposively selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews, chosen to maximize variation in terms of social media usage intensity and academic performance.

The quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising three sections: (1) demographic information and academic performance data (self-reported GPA), (2) the Social Media Usage Scale (SMUS), a 20-item instrument measuring frequency, duration, platform preference, and purpose of use, adapted from Andreassen et al. (2012) with modifications to reflect the Indonesian context, and (3) the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS), a 15-item Likert-scale instrument measuring intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation.

The qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews lasting 45 to 60 minutes, guided by a thematic interview protocol developed from the research questions. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim.



Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between social media usage intensity and GPA. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify significant predictors of academic performance. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, with NVivo 12 software facilitating systematic coding and theme development.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The survey data revealed that all 100 participants (100%) reported using at least one social media platform daily. WhatsApp (98%) emerged as the most widely used platform, followed by YouTube (87%), Instagram (84%), TikTok (76%), and Facebook (41%). With respect to daily usage duration, the distribution was as follows:

Table 1. Social Media Usage Frequency and Academic Performance Distribution (n=100)

Usage Category	Frequency	Percentage	GPA Category
Low (< 2 hrs/day)	18	18%	High (3.50-4.00)
Moderate (2–4 hrs/day)	52	52%	Moderate (2.75-3.49)
High (4–6 hrs/day)	21	21%	Low (2.00-2.74)
Very High (> 6 hrs/day)	9	9%	Very Low (< 2.00)
Total	100	100%	—

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The data in Table 1 indicate that the majority of students (52%) fall within the moderate usage category (2-4 hours per day). A combined 30% of students report high or very high usage exceeding four hours daily, a pattern associated with lower academic achievement as evidenced by the GPA distribution.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between daily social media usage (in hours) and GPA ($r = -0.62$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that as daily social media usage increases, GPA tends to decrease substantially. The correlation was particularly pronounced among students in the very high usage category ($r = -0.78$, $p < 0.01$).

Conversely, a moderate positive correlation was found between academic-purpose social media use (e.g., accessing educational content, joining study groups) and GPA ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that purposeful, goal-directed engagement with social media can have a beneficial effect on academic outcomes.

Multiple regression analysis identified three statistically significant predictors of academic performance: (1) daily social media usage duration ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < 0.001$), (2) frequency of academic-purpose use ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), and (3) self-reported



procrastination tendency ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$). Collectively, these variables explained 54.3% of the variance in GPA ($R^2 = 0.543$, $F(3,96) = 38.14$, $p < 0.001$).

Thematic analysis of the interview data yielded four primary themes: (1) Social Media as a Double-Edged Sword, (2) The Distraction Economy, (3) Peer Influence and Academic Norms, and (4) Calls for Institutional Guidance.

Participants consistently described social media as simultaneously beneficial and harmful to their academic lives. One third-year student articulated this tension: 'I learn a lot from YouTube videos and academic Instagram accounts, but then I get pulled into scrolling for hours and forget about my assignments entirely.' This observation reflects the dual nature of social media as both a resource and a distraction.

The theme of distraction was prominent across all interviews. Students described phenomena such as 'notification anxiety,' the compulsive checking of platforms during study sessions, and the difficulty of re-engaging with academic tasks after social media interruptions. Several students reported using their smartphones during lectures, a behavior they associated with decreased comprehension and note-taking quality.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence for a significant inverse relationship between excessive social media use and academic performance among students at IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto, corroborating and extending the results of prior research (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Junco, 2012; Rosen et al., 2013). The correlation coefficient of -0.62 represents a strong negative association that holds practical significance beyond its statistical meaning.

These results are theoretically consistent with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). Students who spend disproportionate time on social media platforms may develop habituated patterns of passive consumption that erode self-regulatory capacities critical to academic success. Specifically, the displacement hypothesis—wherein social media use displaces time and cognitive resources that would otherwise be devoted to studying—appears well-supported by the present data (Junco & Cotten, 2012).

At the same time, the positive correlation between academic-purpose social media use and GPA underscores the important distinction between different modes of engagement. This finding resonates with Pasek et al.'s (2009) argument that social media per se is not academically detrimental; rather, the manner and purpose of use are the decisive factors. Students who actively leverage social media for collaborative learning, accessing academic content, and peer knowledge exchange appear to benefit measurably in terms of academic performance.

The emergence of procrastination as a significant mediating variable is consistent with research by Rosen et al. (2013), who identified procrastination as a key mechanism through which social media undermines academic performance. The cyclical and algorithmically optimized nature of social media platforms—designed to maximize user



engagement and time-on-platform—renders them particularly potent catalysts of procrastinatory behavior among students already susceptible to self-regulatory failure.

The qualitative data further reveal the nuanced role of social norms and peer influence in shaping students' digital behaviors. Students who perceive academic social media use as normative among their peer group tend to engage in more productive digital practices, whereas those embedded in social networks characterized by entertainment-focused consumption exhibit patterns associated with lower academic achievement. This dynamic reflects Bandura's (1997) concept of observational learning and the social transmission of behavioral norms.

The institutional implications of these findings are significant. IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto, like many higher education institutions in developing regions of Indonesia, operates in a context of rapidly accelerating digital adoption with limited corresponding infrastructure for digital literacy education. The absence of structured guidance on managing social media use leaves students particularly vulnerable to its adverse academic effects. This study's findings lend strong empirical support to calls for the integration of digital literacy into institutional curricula and student orientation programs.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that social media usage exerts a significant and measurable influence on the academic performance of undergraduate students at IAI YAPNAS Jeneponto. Excessive social media use—particularly exceeding four hours per day—is strongly associated with lower GPA, mediated primarily by distraction, procrastination, and sleep disruption. Conversely, moderate, academically purposeful use of social media demonstrates potential benefits for collaborative learning and academic resource access.

The mixed-methods approach employed in this study has yielded a rich, multi-layered understanding of the social media-academic performance relationship that neither quantitative nor qualitative data alone could have provided. The integration of statistical correlations with students' lived experiences offers a nuanced portrait of digital engagement in higher education that carries direct implications for educational practice and policy.

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